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## *The Preparation of the Teacher in General Education*

BY PAUL RUSSELL ANDERSON

THE PROBLEM of better preparation for teachers is not a new one, although the introduction of general education courses in recent years has greatly magnified it. Unhappily we have produced no torrent nor even a healthy shower of helpful suggestions looking toward a solution, but instead a dribble of obvious panacean correctives. Some suggest the prospective teacher should have courses in education. Some would argue that we should raise salaries in order to attract better people into the profession. Others would change the emphasis in graduate instruction, on the assumption that since prospective teachers are not liberally educated when they arrive, the graduate schools should attempt to fill in the gaps. Each of these proposals, as well as others, has some merit but no single one serves as more than a mild palliative. Nothing short of an analysis covering both the attributes of the good teacher and how he becomes a good teacher will reveal the source of our difficulty and thus cast light upon a better path to be sought. In this article little more than a broad outline of such an analysis is possible.

One need not be an administrator to perceive that teaching is less an art to many instructors than a means of making a living; the testimony of students everywhere is the best evidence of the truth of this statement. Almost every campus, of course, has at least one exception, some member of the faculty who vivifies the materials of his field,

possesses a magic touch in the classroom, and stimulates to the point of comprehension. But such achievement is not the common rule, tragic as this may be. Professional incentives have favored productive scholarship over good teaching, and hence teaching has been perfunctory, a means to an end and seldom an end in itself.

Administrators, as well as others, are currently concerned lest the demands of research condone continued ineffectiveness in teaching. They foresee serious consequences in the lives of young citizens if instruction remains secondary to other considerations. They realize, as never before, that no faculty, however distinguished, successfully discharges its obligations unless first and foremost it stimulates and activates a coming generation.

The movement toward specialization has flourished for several decades. In the early nineteenth century there was no serious conflict between research and teaching, for research was concerned with broad issues and teaching was limited to what was regarded as basic knowledge. With the growth of our industrial society, specialization increased by leaps and bounds. It was not enough to be a physician; one had to be a surgeon, a pediatrician, or gynecologist. The same situation existed in engineering, in law, and in other fields. It was the accepted notion that to make good one had to spend more and more time digging deeper and deeper into a narrower and narrower area; the

greater rewards were along this path. Applied science led in a movement which quickly affected graduate, undergraduate, and even secondary education. As graduate science instruction became more specialized, undergraduate preparation also took on a professional character. The inventor in private life was paralleled by the research scientist on the campus. By all external signs this was as it should be, since such activity increased our productive capacity and made the comforts of life more generally available. Science and scientific specialization were effective, and soon quantification and the love of detail became common to other academic areas. As the study of social relationships became more respectable, attempts were made to express conclusions concerning them in mathematical and scientific terms. The tendency extended even into the humanities, and linguistics began to flourish. Many operated on the assumption that there was a *science* of everything, that investigation, classification, generalization, and verification were as applicable to creative values as to natural phenomena. Research won out over teaching everywhere.

More or less concurrently, institutions of higher learning were coming of age. Up to this time almost every first-rate scholar had acquired his graduate training abroad. Desirous now of achieving equality with foreign universities, institutions here patterned themselves after those abroad rather than evolving a new program. Thus concentration upon individual research and professional orientation came to permeate higher education.

One other important historical factor should be mentioned, the elective system. This came into being as the curriculum increased in scope. It was designed primarily to break the academic lock-step by providing greater range for satisfying individual needs. Expected to liberalize education further, it actually worked in the opposite direction, for as specialization increased, breadth of training and perspective decreased. Concentration in one area of vocational significance was favored over distribution of knowledge and understanding.

These tendencies had serious effects upon the content and emphasis of the curriculum and also upon the attitudes and training of the newer generation of teachers. The curriculum became more and more atomized in content as subject after subject and course after course were added for special purposes. The education of the humane citizen was sacrificed to the training of the restricted expert. Even within fields, old courses with some catholicity of interest were broken up into smaller chronological or structural units, and "applied this" and "applied that" were made a part of the total program. It became increasingly difficult for the student seeking a liberal education to get an overall picture even of an individual field as introductory courses in one discipline after another were made subservient to advanced courses, rather than panoramic and integrative. The tendency would not have developed such serious consequences if it had been restricted to graduate instruction. But unfortunately the same forces affected undergraduate and secondary education, leaving little opportunity anywhere along the line for the student to get a general education, except by uncommon planning or happenstance.

The younger men and women interested in academic posts were subjected to this professionalized emphasis to the extent that they were trained to become chemists, historians, and philosophers rather than teachers in these fields; or, to put it more precisely, were trained to be chemists, historians, and philosophers on the false assumption that intensive without extensive study is adequate preparation for teaching. Professional courses in education were shunned, partly because of the inferior offerings in the field and also because of the emphasis upon research, scholarship, investigation, and discovery within the field of specialization.

Administrators quickly fell in line with the new tendency. They wanted scholars on the faculty, the best ones in the field. They wanted publication lists and high comparative percentages of those possessing the doctorate. When

seeking new faculty they were more careful to ascertain research capabilities than teaching skill. They wanted the specialist.

In view of these considerations it is small wonder that today there is deep concern for the uncertain quality of teaching in institutions of higher learning, particularly for courses in general education which purport to be more than a mere aggregate of materials taken from existent introductory courses. We have not supplied adequate incentives for superior teaching, we have failed to provide prospective teachers with a general education, and we have given practically no attention in our graduate program to the training of teachers.

Before turning to proposals for rectifying this situation it is important that we know what qualities we seek in the instructor in a curriculum of general education. On the whole the needed qualities are those characteristic of the good teacher in any field at any time.

To be specific, good teaching is the result of a working combination of personal abilities, professional training, and teaching skills. Not that all good teachers have the same combination; they do not. Some have such consummate talent in manipulating the materials of a field as to override deficiencies in personality and knowledge of teaching media. Others have such dynamic personalities as to be able to teach almost anything, regardless of preparation. Much more rare is the successful teacher who is thoroughly acquainted with teaching skills but who lacks personal talent and professional background. The point, however, still holds—that teaching is essentially an art, and that success in it depends upon a relatively unique combination of factors rather than upon adherence to a rigid formula.

The good teacher must *be somebody*. The best form of teaching is example, and yet how quickly we forget this! One reason liberal education has become less than liberal is that there are so few faculty members who either talk or act like liberally educated people themselves. Many of the abiding services of education are not to be found

in textbooks or lectures; they are derived directly from the instructor, his attitudes, beliefs, and abilities. William Alexander Percy's analysis of the contribution of the Judge Griffin under whom he read the literary masters bears repeating: "As with all great teachers, his curriculum was an insignificant part of what he communicated. From him you didn't learn a subject, but life. I suspect anyway that the important things we learn we never remember because they become part of us; we absorb them. We don't absorb the multiplication table (at least not the seventh and the eleventh), but those things that are vitamins and calories to the spirit, the spirit seizes on and transmutes into its own strength, wholly and forgetfully. Tolerance and justice, fearlessness and pride, reverence and pity, are learned in a course on long division if the teacher has those qualities, as Judge Griffin had."

To "be somebody" means to possess certain enviable personal characteristics. While it may be too much to expect the teacher to be a paragon, there is hardly a human virtue which is not of some use in his profession. The more he develops and cultivates these the greater his impact upon students. Honesty, sincerity, integrity, sympathy, kindness, humility, friendliness, tolerance, humor, patience—these and perhaps other virtues are extremely desirable, if not indispensable. The good teacher will have uncommon character and be forceful because he has character. He will be admired and respected because of what he is and by this very fact will inspire his students to seek for the abiding results of true learning. The good teacher possesses the qualities which make for success in almost any line, but these qualities are infinitely more important to his profession because he is an example and an instrument for growth to a coming generation.

Rather obviously the good teacher must *know something*, must radiate confidence in his comprehension of materials. The average beginning instructor is better prepared for graduate teaching than for introductory or general education courses. If he has completed the conventional graduate

program he doubtless possesses "coverage" of the field, perhaps even in greater detail than some of his professors, but he often falls down in his first teaching position because his perspective is dim. He is neither sufficiently conscious of where the student is nor where he ought to be led. He has had abundant scholarly food in graduate school but he is gorged and digestion has been ineffective. His courses are likely to be rich in factual detail, seriously deficient in discrimination. Yet this is the instructor who is asked to teach the introductory courses, and more often than not is asked to participate in the general education program if one is under way. Ordinarily several years of reconditioning are necessary before he reaches the level of the mature, mellow teacher.

The teacher's portfolio of knowledge must include methodology. Three competences are particularly important; they are the skills of investigation, discrimination, and correlation. The good teacher practices these every day in class. He knows his field so well that he knows how to approach a problem when it arises, how to pick out the essential from the unessential, and how to make careful judgments concerning materials within his own course and field and their relationship to other fields. It must be remembered that teaching on a high level is concerned less with the impartation of knowledge, more with a meaningful interpretation of it. Content must be related to real problems, and these problems in turn clarified because the content is relevant. Nor does the good teacher provide all the answers (even if he knows them), for if the problem is defined and a method of approach and guidance provided, the student will acquire for himself increasing insight and understanding through the process of analysis. This is the way we learn, and the good teacher is one who helps others learn rather than one who learns for them. The teacher's mastery consists less in the encyclopedic character of his knowledge, more in his ability to manipulate and control it for purposes of clarification.

This leads to the third area in which the teacher must excel. He must be able to *elicit something*.

We are gradually coming to recognize the sterility of the academic formula which places the teacher on one side of the desk with all knowledge at his command and the students on the other side with blank but open minds to be filled. Learning is not a passive feat of memory but rather an outgoing activity on the part of the student, a search followed by discovery. The truly great teachers have never been authoritarians; they have been leaders in a common quest for knowledge. Their skill has consisted in the ability to make the search so exciting, the bypaths as well as the main path so illumined that by an admixture of challenge and inspiration the student has been led somewhere; this will be so wherever effective learning takes place.

To draw the student out is not easy. Understanding of and interest in him and his possible rate and degree of development are basic. Clarity of mind and fertility of thought are essential. But most important of all is a contagious enthusiasm, a conviction about the significance of one's subject, and an irrepressible desire to have others share something of the pleasure of pursuing it. Truly vital teaching comes when a student whose predilections are arrayed in opposition to a subject comes to life with a new understanding of it. Learning is a dynamic movement from indifference, ignorance, and misconception to appreciation, knowledge, and understanding. The effective teacher helps to make this transition smooth and inevitable.

The college teacher has responsibilities which go beyond the classroom. As a citizen, with greater knowledge and discipline than the average, he has significant obligations in the community. As a scholar, he has responsibility for advancing knowledge and understanding. As a counselor, he must help students with their individual problems. As a faculty member, he must concern himself with curricula and institutional problems. His functions are so numerous and his vocation so necessary that every effort should be made to select him carefully and train him wisely. This description of the good teacher may be too ideal-



ized, but I hardly think so, for I see no way to improve instruction in general education unless we seek and train men and women who either have or can develop these talents.

The first plank in a platform for the training of good teachers is to select likely candidates for the profession. I use the word "select" advisedly, for there is currently no selective process at work insofar as factors other than academic record are concerned. Furthermore I say "select" because in higher education we have no control over many of the conditioning factors which make men what they are. We have no direct authority over home, community environment, or early schooling, and these are strong influences. The best we can do from a practical standpoint is to begin the process of teacher selection on the college level. This is a significant and imposing responsibility.

The inadequacy of the conventional procedure can be made clear through reference to a hypothetical case. An intellectually capable student gets into an introductory course in the sophomore year and demonstrates interest and ability. Since he must select a major by the end of the sophomore year and he has had thus far no strong vocational drive he consults the instructor in the course who happens also to be head of the department. The instructor quizzes him about his interest, he emphasizes to some extent the importance of his own discipline and its vocational opportunities, and he encourages the student to concentrate in the department. After having pondered the matter the student returns and expresses his desire to major in the instructor's field. The instructor becomes his adviser and urges him to take a large portion of the courses offered in the department and in a certain sequence. He cherishes the idea of sending the student on to graduate school, probably his own, and he wants him to be thoroughly conversant with materials in the field before he gets there. He therefore helps the student plan his major program carefully but gives little consideration to courses the student really ought to take, other than those which are strictly supporting subjects. Slight attention is

paid to the possibility that this same student may have a serious speech defect, may have antisocial proclivities, may lack one or many of the traits earlier mentioned as extremely desirable in the teacher, may possess a negative personality. Advice based solely on academic interest and achievement may be adequate for those who intend to go into research but this same advice courts disaster and contributes to mediocrity where college teaching is involved.

There are many good teachers in institutions of higher learning. There are also many poor ones, partly because the selective process is inadequate. Too much emphasis has been placed on course record, too little upon breadth of training and upon personal and moral qualities. Colleges and universities can do much to correct deficiency in breadth of training. The undergraduate college can also do something to develop desirable intangible qualities. But we shall still have to count heavily on selection to provide us with disciplined and civilized material.

It is not too much to ask the college to assume serious responsibility for the first process of sifting, and this can be done in a preliminary way as early as the sophomore year. If every institution in the land were to set up a committee charged with the task of selecting prospective college teachers and planning their program a new direction might be set. This would involve determining the qualities desired in the teacher, seriously considering the proper undergraduate training needed, and helping selected students plan their graduate study. Properly inaugurated, such a program would add prestige to the profession and increasingly attract truly able young people. Much as I believe that the economic status of the profession should be improved, this is by no means a panacea. Equally important as incentives are other factors such as status. A bold restudy of regulations governing promotion and retention would be helpful. Nothing is more discouraging to those considering the profession than to learn that all too often real accomplishment is a secondary factor in promotion and that tenure unintentionally protects the

weak and holds back the talented. The function of a committee such as the one proposed should include recruitment, and this task would not be difficult if standards within the profession unqualifiedly encouraged development and progression.

A second and even more crucial selection must be made by the graduate school. Those planning to teach should be admitted on a different basis than those wishing to do graduate work for other reasons. Applicants for admission to candidacy for a degree leading to teaching should be screened in terms of the qualities and accomplishments demanded and not alone on the basis of academic record. The graduate school should make certain that the candidate has had a broad general education, has had sufficient training to enable him to pursue his studies in a special field or area, and has admirable personal qualifications. The increasing use of the Graduate Record Examination as a basis for admission is a step in the right direction but much remains to be done to refine the entire admissions procedure. If selection were more carefully made there would be fewer casualties either in graduate school or on the job. Standards for entrance into college teaching should be at least as high as those in other professional fields such as medicine.

But obviously better selection alone is not enough. We must bend every effort to coordinate the undergraduate and graduate training of the prospective teacher in such a way that he comes out with richer and more flexible preparation. There are specific and different primary responsibilities which each of these levels must bear. Much confusion exists at present as to which level should do what, with the result that neither is doing effectively what it should do.

May I diverge momentarily to point out that most administrators are convinced that the answer to the problem of how to prepare teachers for courses in general education does not lie in segregating them from other specialists but rather in training specialists who can teach general education courses. There are several reasons for such an

opinion. In the first place, courses in general education vary widely from institution to institution and they are likely to continue to do so. Secondly, it is extremely desirable, if not necessary, that those who teach general education courses teach other courses as well. And finally, general education is an all-college enterprise and its full effect can be felt only when the entire faculty (whether or not engaged in the actual teaching of general education courses) puts the full weight of its influence behind both the determination of the program and its implementation. Nothing weakens a program in general education more quickly than a division of the faculty between those who are teaching such courses and those who are concerned exclusively with teaching departmental courses in the time-honored way. Nor is the assumption that general education is to be achieved solely through certain required courses adequate. To be effective a program of general education must permeate the entire program of the institution. The conclusion readily follows that all faculty members must share in the program to greater or less degree and they must all be capable of furthering the general education of the student. As an administrator my conviction is that every teacher should possess a background sufficiently thorough to qualify him for participation in a program of general education.

Let us return now to the problem of how undergraduate and graduate institutions may help train individuals for this task. Much of the discussion of this problem has centered around the inadequacy of graduate training. That graduate instruction can be improved is almost without question, but undergraduate instruction is even more deficient. Here encompassing changes should be made.

The whole issue boils down to the uncomfortable fact that we have entirely too few teachers who have had a general education themselves. This they must somehow get if the situation is to be improved. Little is to be accomplished by complaining that the graduate schools fail to turn

out the proper kind of teachers when we haven't sent them the proper kind of students in the first place. Higher education is organized somewhat pyramidically, and rightly so. The base should be exceedingly broad in order that the apex may have solid undergirding. It has been the historic function of the undergraduate college to provide general education, except that in recent decades it has done this rather poorly or not at all. A renewal of interest on the college level in providing real general education will do more in the long run to develop good teachers than almost all other suggestions put together.

General education as I understand it is that type of education which is planned to develop literate, reflective, informed, and civilized citizens. Literacy should be defined as something more functional than passing a course in freshman English. Reflection should involve something more than acquaintance with the laws of the syllogism or the repetition of someone else's thoughts. Being informed should consist of something more significant than having a speaking acquaintance with the technical terminology of a few isolated and unrelated fields. And being civilized should assume more precise dimensions than the term "college-bred" currently implies. Undergraduate education is and has been fragmentary, disorganized, and compartmentalized. If we are to train better teachers and better men, it will have to be made more thorough, orderly, and integrated.

In any reconsideration of the undergraduate program several foci are important. In the first place, we must consider ends before means. We must delineate the results which we propose to achieve in and for students in terms of abilities and attitudes as well as forms of knowledge. This involves no imposition of an arbitrary curriculum for there are numerous means of achieving similar results. Once we describe the type of graduate desired, light will be cast on the type of program to be followed even though its details will vary somewhat from institution to institution. Failure to determine the ends to be sought, however, will imperil the development of an orderly program.

Second, the content of the program must be comprehensive, that is, inclusive of the major concepts and ideas of all significant areas of knowledge. Third, the emphasis in the program must be upon interrelationships rather than upon aggregates of fact. And fourth, the program must be related to life problems.

Judged by such a standard it is appalling to note how wanting the average college curriculum is today. Yet we are not without hope, for if the present ferment continues undergraduate education will in the near future provide a solid, cohesive, and productive background for the next generation of teachers. A few institutions have developed a real program in general education already and many have made the first steps, although much remains to be done before we can properly say that general education is firmly established.

Granting that in the long run extension of general education will help immeasurably in training better teachers, we still have an immediate situation to face. We need teachers now who can teach the future teachers what they need to know in order to participate in a full program of general education. Where shall these be found?

At first sight this problem may seem insoluble. Further observation, however, provides several leads. On every college faculty there are some who have acquired a general education in spite of their formal training and who are deeply interested in developing a program of general education; they should be given an opportunity to use their talents. There are other faculty members who, strictly speaking, may not have the proper background but who are willing to learn; these too can find a place of usefulness. The experience which we have had at Pennsylvania College for Women in discovering on our own campus multiple-talent people has been paralleled elsewhere. Ordinarily there are enough individuals of ability on the campus to get such a program under way when their background is known. If a true program of integration is contemplated, the interplay of mind on mind that takes place in the coopera-



tive task of developing such a program will be an in-service form of training itself. Then there is an increasing number of summer workshops devoted to general education and participation in these is extremely helpful in reorienting a faculty member. There are also numerous individuals who are interested in general education but whose present positions offer no outlet in this direction and who would be attracted by a real opportunity. In addition, certain graduate schools are already engaged in programs for the training of general education teachers, and they are beginning to turn out candidates. The immediate problem of securing adequate personnel is difficult to be sure, but it is not insurmountable as the experience of those institutions which have earnestly tried to develop a program in general education clearly demonstrates. Once the shackles of traditional curricular thought are broken on a campus it is amazing to see how creative faculty and administration may become.

The undergraduate college must obviously provide the prospective teacher with sufficient background for advanced work in a field as well as with a background in general education. But specialized preparation should be secondary, and this is rarely true today. In many cases the candidate has enough course credit for a master's degree in a field. This should not be permitted, no matter how concentrated the interest and energy of the student. The undergraduate college should focus its attention on providing broad experience in essential areas of knowledge, and training in the development of intellectual and moral skills. In contrast, the graduate institution should concern itself primarily with professional training, interpreted broadly enough to include whatever advanced studies are likely to make for good teaching. The graduate school can do a great deal more than it has done to develop an organized training program for college teachers but its responsibility is to augment the general education the student already possesses rather than to make up for its earlier neglect. The worst mistake a graduate institution can make is to water down its program

for prospective general education teachers in the attempt to provide a new correlation leading to a special degree. That the graduate program for teachers should have special features has been rather generally accepted, but this should be a program for specialists who are broadly trained rather than for general education experts whose depth in any particular area is necessarily severely limited.

There is little quarrel about the desirability of individual research in the graduate program. If such research is carried out on a high level it will provide much needed discipline in the arts of investigation and analysis. Problem solving is a necessity in human living and a natural part of the learning process on any level. Good teachers should be masters in this art; research of significant and continuous character is of incalculable value in the training process. The common weakness, however, is in the choice of unimportant and even irrelevant research topics. A reading of the dissertation titles chosen by Ph.D. candidates in any year quickly reveals how inconsequential many of the problems are. If primary consideration were given to topics of significance in one or more fields and their relationships to the problems of living rather than to subjects no one else has written on or even been interested in, theses would not only provide broader training but might often be considerably more productive from a scholarly point of view as well. This change in the graduate program would not be difficult and it is exceedingly important.

Graduate instruction should be more concerned with interrelationships than is the practice now. Analysis makes segmentation necessary, but analysis without correlation is no more satisfactory than medical diagnosis without cure. Correlations differ in extent. There are field correlations, area correlations and problem correlations, the latter consisting of judgments derived through analysis of materials from whatever fields or areas are pertinent to the problem concerned. Unfortunately graduate instruction has been limited largely to correlations of the first type. This has been

true because instruction on this level has been subject-centered rather than student-centered or problem-centered. If we are to train better teachers we shall have to provide an instructional emphasis more relevant to their needs. The entire program must be designed so that the prospective teacher will learn to see facts in terms of their meaning from the broadest perspective possible in field, in area, and in terms of basic issues. The emphasis should be on concepts, on philosophical and historical backgrounds, and on current relationships. Whether this be done through special seminars crossing departmental and divisional lines or through other techniques is not so important as that it be done. This is seldom the case at present.

One further readjustment in the graduate training of teachers is in order, a healing of the breach between subject-matter specialists and those primarily concerned with the process of education. Proper training consists of both what to teach and how to teach. Exclusive preoccupation with the former is likely to make teaching circuitous while the latter leaves it barren; both content and method are important. Certainly the teacher would be more effective if he knew the basic principles of learning, something of the development of higher education and the philosophical issues involved. His service as a faculty member would be greatly enhanced were he to approach problems from the standpoint of their pertinence to the entire educational process rather than in terms of their effect upon his own subject matter.

Time given to such instruction in graduate school need not be extensive if the essentials are carefully sorted from the nonessentials. This, combined with a planned and supervised period of in-service teaching, would aid considerably in turning out improved personnel. Most graduate students get some opportunity to teach while in graduate school but this is often in terms of introductory courses in the undergraduate unit or in extension work, in either case without benefit of counsel and criticism. To be profitable such training should be planned as an integral part of the graduate program.

The administrator too can contribute to more dynamic teaching in general education. He can make it clear that general education is regarded as important, that rewards for good teaching will match those for research, that teaching in a program of general education not only does not preclude research but that time will be made available for it whether in old or new forms, that the entire influence of the institution is behind successful operation of such a program.

The standard of teaching today is not high. It can be made so if incentives, selective process, undergraduate and graduate training are coordinated toward this end. In recent decades we have not paid serious attention to the improvement of this indispensable art; this we now must do. General education, designed to develop an energized, enlightened citizenry, demands the best in teaching that training can provide.